COUP THAT FAILED

By H. M. EGBERT.

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It was not the shock of arms, but thirst, that threatened to force the devoted city into surrender.

For months the enemy had hurled their lines against the fortress, only to see the gallant troops retire, decimated, baffled by the strong earthworks that promised to hold out indefinitely. And until the city fell the forward march of the victorious army could not continue.

General Lamarche was desperate. He could not leave the fortress in his rear untaken and continue his advance toward the capital of the enemy, for that would mean that his lines of communication would be severed. And behind those walls the enemy was reforming, ready to renew the war in all its pristine vigor.

But for months no drop of rain had fallen. The springs within the city had run dry. The river had been dammed and diverted by the besiegers. And there remained hardly three days' supply of water.

That the city was in need of water General Lamarche knew; but he did not know how near it was to surrender. And every day's delay was worth a thousand men to those within.

It was at this juncture that he gave audience to the man who had begged for an interview daily during the past month.

"Let the fellow come in," he said reluctantly to his aide. "Well, sir?" he demanded, as the ragged, wild-looking fellow stood before him.

"My name is Durand," said the man.

General Lamarche started slightly. "The aviator?" he asked.

Durand bowed his head.

Lamarche, like every Frenchman, knew about Durand. He had been one of the foremost men to develop the dirigible gas-balloon. While others

Rose Slowly Into the Air.

worked upon the aeroplane, Durand had brought the dirigible almost to perfection. And, at the moment when he was about to see his invention adopted by the French army, he had committed murder—a foul, inexcusable murder while under the influence of absinthe, to which he had become addicted by reason of the mental strain he had undergone.

He was shipped to New Caledonia, but, after serving three years there, he was pardoned and disappeared from the haunts of his associates. That was a year ago, and since then nothing had been heard of him.

"I want to do something for my country," Durand explained.

"You shall be attached to the aeroplane division," answered Lamarche.

Durand laughed quietly. "I do not wish to become a private aviator," he said. "I have a plan by which you can capture Fort Gleichen."

"What is it?" asked Lamarche impatiently. He had had a thousand plans submitted to him during the past three months.

"Give me a thousand pounds of melinite," answered Durand, "and I will blow it into the earth. I will blow away all traces of it."

"If there is a thousand pounds of melinite to spare in France you shall have it, provided you can convince me of the feasibility of your scheme," the general answered.

"It is very simple," replied Durand. "In the mountains of the Vosges, where I have lived during the last year, I have my perfected dirigible. I will load it with a thousand pounds of melinite, which is as much as it will carry, in addition to my own weight. I will steer it above Fort Gleichen, pull the valve open, after calculating the descent, and escape in my parachute. The balloon will drop squarely into the center of the fort and blow it from the face of the earth."

They talked over the project for a while, and the more Durand explained, the more feasible his proposal appeared to the French general.

Of course, from an aeroplane, only small bombs could be dropped. But there was no reason why a balloon should not contain a thousand pounds of melinite, an explosive deadly enough to obliterate all trace of the famous stronghold that barred the advance of the army. It was obvious, furthermore, that the dead weight of the load, after the valve had been opened, would send the dirigible to earth with a speed and aim that nothing could avert.

Seven days later Durand, with a thousand pounds of melinite in his dirigible balloon, and the parachute attached to the aluminum stern, rose slowly above the French camp into the air.

From the walls of the fortress the besieged general, glass to his eyes, watched and wondered at this new maneuver.

He had sworn never to surrender, and by heroic privations his men had managed to conserve still another day's supply of water, though nearly all their animals were dead of thirst. It was the general's intention to cut his way out at the head of his troops on the morrow, and die upon the field—unless it rained.

But the scorched heavens refused to open. Day and night were one brazen glow of heat. All night heat lightning played on the horizon, and sometimes the distant muttering of thunder was heard, but never a drop of rain had fallen.

Durand rose slowly into the air, and, as he did so, the airguns of the fortress opened fire upon him. But it is the most difficult thing in the world to hit a quickly rising balloon, and neither Durand nor Lamarche had any fears on that score. If the balloon were hit, the melinite would explode in the air and the balloon and aviator would vanish—but no harm would come to the besiegers. At worst, the experiment would harm nobody.

At an altitude of two thousand feet the balloon was safe from danger. Durand smiled as he heard the great shells whizzing around him. He knew that only a miracle of marksmanship could bring him down.

At four thousand feet Durand was only a speck in the sky, hardly to be discerned even through Lamarche's glasses. The French camp strained its eyes upward. The report of the broken man's exploit, which was to restore his honor and bring, no doubt, the ribbon of the legion of honor, had become universal. And in the beleaguered fortress for the first time an inkling of the airman's intentions became obvious when a tiny speck was seen to detach itself from the slightly larger mass and drop toward earth.

Instantly it had begun the swift descent, while the balloon, relieved of its slighter burden, shot upward, in spite of the rapid escape of gas. The dirigible ascended five hundred feet before it paused, stood still, and then began its downward rush.

Durand had planned his descent so that it should carry him into the French lines. But to his horror a sudden breeze drove the parachute straight toward the inside of the fortress walls. And then, resigning himself to the inevitable, he devoted all his efforts toward saving his life, rather than attempting to gain the camp of the besiegers, which would mean an instant drop to death.

It was about a minute after he had pulled the cord of the valve when Durand dropped, unharmed, at the feet of the general in defense of Fort Gleichen.

But nobody noticed him, for all eyes were strained upward to where the great balloon came whirling down, straight toward the fortress. Here Durand had not miscalculated. It fell true as an arrow, and the heat lightning played about it and—

Boom!

The most awful detonation that had ever been heard since war began filled the whole air with sound. A coil of cloud enveloped everything and shut out the sunlight. Slowly it drifted away. And everyone knew what had occurred. The dirigible had been struck by lightning during its descent.

An instant later the sun disappeared. And suddenly, with the sound of a million bullets, hailstones the size of pigeons' eggs whizzed to the earth, followed by a drenching downpour.

Never had it rained as it rained that afternoon. The water fell in torrents. It was as though a million hoses were turned earthward from the heavens. In two minutes the camps were flooded. The streets of the beleaguered town ran water. Men flung themselves upon their faces and wallowed in the precious rain. From every house buckets, bath tubs, implements of every kind were outstretched to hold the life-giving water. The cisterns overflowed. The besieged city was saved.

Durand stood before the general within the fortress. His hope had failed, by the interposition of the unexpected element, fate, which sends so many schemes agley.

He expected death. He was not even in uniform—a hopeless, ragged ex-convict, bearing the stamp of shame upon his furrowed face.

The general turned to him. "Do you know what is going to happen to you?" he asked.

"A firing party, I suppose," Durand muttered.

"No," answered the general quietly. "You are going to make a balloon for us."

Make Sunflower Useful.

In some countries, notably in the Russian provinces north of the Caucasus, the sunflower serves other purposes besides ornamenting gardens with its huge golden blossoms. The seeds are used to make oil, which is employed both in the manufacture of soap and in cooking. The stems and leaves are burned and the ashes used to make potash. Last year the sunflower factories of the Caucasus produced 15,000 tons of potash.

Household Hint From Father.

(You could write your name on the table, it was that dusty.) "Suppose," said father, peering over his glasses (eye glasses) at his industrious rag-playing daughter, "I say, suppose you stop hammering on the 'Mendelssohn Rag' for a while, and practice with the dust-rag an hour or two. I think mother would be pleased."

Still Speaking.

"She told Percival never to speak to her again and he said, 'Oh, very well!' and left her."

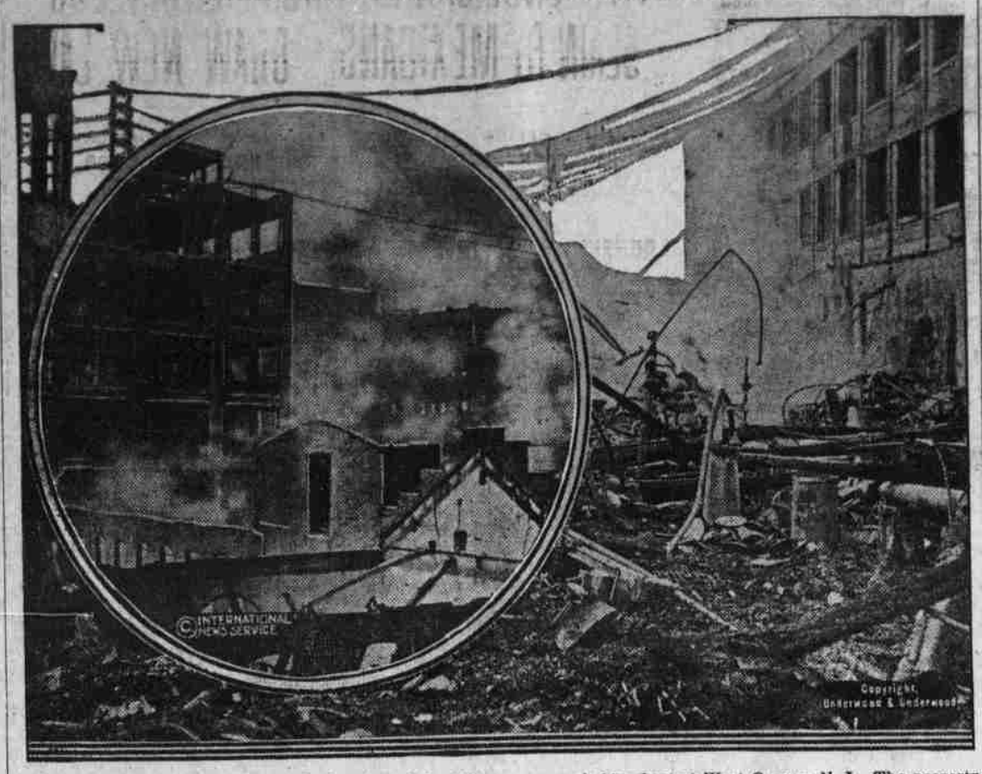
"And they don't speak?"

"Oh, yes, they do. She saw to that. She went immediately and secured a situation as a telephone operator."

Quits.

"Your boys were in my appletree again," observed the first suburbanite. "If you say anything more about it," declared the second ditto, "I'll send you the doctor's bill."—Philadelphia Ledger.

FIRE DESTROYS GREAT EDISON PLANT



Photographs taken during the burning of the Edison company's big plant at West Orange, N. J. The property destroyed was valued at $7,000,000.

ISLE OF MARKEN FLOODED

The Isle of Marken, in the Zuyder Zee, known to nearly every American tourist, is suffering from floods caused by the cutting of the dikes in Flanders. One of its streets is here shown, with natives rowing about in their gardens.

WITH THE GERMANS IN EAST PRUSSIA

German soldiers guarding an outpost in East Prussia, near the Russian border, passing away the time by studying war pictures. The lower photo shows a German supply column making its way to the base of supplies.

BEAUTIFUL CHURCH LAID IN RUINS

Exterior of the church at Ramscapelle after the once beautiful edifice had been wrecked by the shells of the contending armies.

GERMAN WINTER HELMETS

These are two types of knitted helmets adopted by the German army for the troops during the winter. Not only are they warm, but they also cover the metal helmets so their shining does not afford a mark for the enemy.

MAJ. DWIGHT E. AULTMAN

Major Aultman of the Sixth Field artillery of the United States army is one of the six officers who have been sent over to observe the operations of the armies in the European war. He graduated from West Point with the class of 1890.

American Nurses Risked Lives in Belgrade.

London.—Mme. Slavko Grouich, whose birthplace was Virginia and whose husband was charge d'affaires of the Servian legation here until more important duties called him to Nish at the commencement of the war, gave a graphic description of the important part played in the Servian Red Cross by the American hospital unit.

When the mission of the American Red Cross, comprising three surgeons and twelve nurses, reported themselves at Nish they were at first assigned to the base hospital near Nish. But Mme. Grouich remarked that they clamored to go to the front.

"I didn't suggest it to them," she added, "because of the great danger involved, but I told Doctor Ryan, head of the mission, that they must get permission to go to Belgrade. The conditions there were simply terrible. There was no surgeon and very few physicians and nurses, but the American mission simply laughed when reminded of the perils of bombardment and so on October 8 we landed in the outskirts of Belgrade.

"I accompanied the party as a sort of guide. As we were proceeding into the city the shells began dropping in unpleasant proximity to our carriages. When one burst less than two hundred feet [illegible] looked anxiously at Miss Gladw[illegible] chief of nurses. She smiled and [illegible] calmly: 'It sounds like the Fo[illegible] July.'"

NEWS and GOSSIP of WASHINGTON

Fish Doctor Wanted for Government Hatcheries

WASHINGTON.—Congress has been asked by the bureau of fisheries of the department of commerce for an appropriation of $2,500 annually to cover the salary of a family physician for all the domesticated fishes of the United States. It has been estimated by fish experts in the employ of the government that epidemics among infant fish at government hatcheries cost more than $1,000,000 a year. These epidemics usually occur among fish less than six months of age, and the damage worked by disease is greatly increased when the adult value of the fish is taken into consideration.

For $2,500 a year, officials of the bureau say they can obtain the services of a fish pathologist, whose training has made him an expert in diseases of the finny youngsters.

Once the $2,500 is secured, it is proposed to retain a male fish pathologist who has made a life work of one of the strangest paths of scientific endeavor known. There are barely a score of recognized fish pathologists in the United States at the present time, it is said, and one of the possible sources of difficulty the government may experience is the employment of such an expert at a salary of only $2,500 a year. He will be required to make his headquarters at Washington and receive here the reports of threatened outbreaks of epidemics at government hatcheries in any part of the country.

It is not particularly well known to the general public that trout and salmon are greatly troubled with a disease which in the human being would be considered somewhat close to a goitre. This is a swelling of the thyroid gland in the throat of a salmon or a trout, which soon becomes apparent by a swelling of the throat, and eventually results in the death of the afflicted fish. At the present there is no known remedy for the disease, and it is to begin a study of this and similar ailments that the bureau of fisheries is asking for a fish doctor.

Bugs, Deprived of Food, Desert the Patent Office

BUGS of varied shapes and hues no longer lap up milk with great gusto in the patent office as of yore. The good old days of Bugdom's free dairy lunch in that building have passed forever, if Judge James I. Parker, chief clerk of the interior department, has anything to say in the matter—and he has everything to say, as a matter of fact.

The judge has just issued an edict that milk bottles—either full, half full or empty—are to disappear at once from the precincts of the patent office. It is not so much that the bugs scramble in gangs and troops from all corners and crevices of the patent office and invade the galleries where the employees of the office are wont to congregate at lunch hours and regale themselves with foods and milk. It is not so much that the bugs clamber down the sides of empty milk bottles and eagerly lap up the succulent drops of the white fluid. The judge hasn't the slightest desire to deprive poor hungry bugs of their sustenance.

But the judge has a decided feeling against the bugs eating up the thousands of drawings and descriptions of patents stored in the galleries. It appears that the bugs, after feeding on milk left by kind-hearted employees of the department, are still hungry, and go foraging around in the files for choice documents upon which to finish their repasts. Perhaps it is wrong to drink first and eat afterward, but these are bugs, remember, and there is no accounting for what bugs will do.

Finger-Print System Proves Useful to the Army

BRIG. GEN. GEORGE ANDREWS, as adjutant general of the army, has made a report to the war department in regard to the successful operation of the finger-print system of identification in the detection of military offenders. At present, he says, the adjutant general's office has on file the finger-print records of 202,244 individuals who are now or had been previously enlisted in the army.

During the past fiscal year 467 cases of fraudulent enlistment of former deserters, general prisoners and others were discovered through the finger-print system. During the preceding year the number of cases of fraudulent enlistment discovered through that system was 256, and during the fiscal year 1912 the number was 337.

"This office," says General Andrews, "has identified by means of this system dead men who were former soldiers and whose identity could not be satisfactorily established in any other way, as well as civil offenders who sought to evade arrest for their crimes by enlisting in the army under assumed names, and soldiers who left impressions of their fingers while in the act of committing some serious offense.

"It is undoubtedly true that the use of finger-print records and photographs has deterred criminals from attempting to enter the army for the purpose of escaping detection and arrest by the civil authorities."

Many Eligible Bachelors in the National Capital

WASHINGTON has a long list of eligible bachelors. Among them is the new associate justice of the Supreme court, Judge McReynolds. However, he is by no means a misogamist. He is fond of the society of girls and likes to do nice things for them and pay them little attentions. The third assistant postmaster-general, Alexander Dockery, is another bachelor. At his home in Missouri he is a political force. He was at one time governor of the state.

There is also John Barrett, director of the Pan-American union. He is a man of some means, with a taste for society.

The presence of the diplomatic corps in Washington naturally means the presence of a host of young attaches, not all eligible, perhaps, but dear to the heart of the debutante and the hostess. And there are six foreign ministers here who are bachelors—namely, Don Roberto Brenes Mesen from Costa Rica, Mehdi Khan from Persia, Dr. Alberto Membreno from Honduras, Dr. Carlos Manuel de Cespedes from Cuba, Viscount d'Alte from Portugal and Constantin Brun from Denmark.

The senate has a full allowance of bachelors, and the house bristles with them. Moreover, an unusual number of army and navy bachelors now occupy positions of trust and importance in the national capital.

And the widowers must not be overlooked. Foremost among them is John R. McLean, one of the richest men in the city, owner of one of the handsomest homes in Washington, to say nothing of Friendship, his country place near by. He entertains constantly and elaborately and is a notably charming host. Then there is William H. Lamar, attorney-general for the post office department, a fine-looking man with brains.

Poor Hen.

A couple of Pennsylvania farmers, a man and wife, drove from their farm to the nearest railway. The man, small and scared, sat meekly beside his wife, who filled two-thirds of the seat, and only spoke to command. Finally the station was reached. The woman hustled in, settled her numerous bundles, and sat down. Looking over her goods and chattels, she suddenly missed something, and looking about, discovered that her husband had remained outside on the platform. She rapped sharply on the window. 'Hen!" she called, pointing to the perch beside her. "Come set."

Rival Authors.

Charles Reade's famous novel, "The Cloister and the Hearth"—was referred to by its author as "a good mediæval story." One-fifth of the material in "The Cloister and the Hearth" first made its appearance as a serial in Harper's Weekly in 1859, under the title "A Good Fight." At the same time, says the author of "The House of Harper," Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities" was being serialized in the same journal. Reade, not entirely satisfied with the agent's offer, wrote the Harpers in regard to payment: "'A Good Fight' is a masterpiece. 'A Tale of Two Cities' is not a masterpiece."